



School for the Deaf

South Dakota
School for the Deaf
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

History

The South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD) has continuously provided elementary, secondary, and early childhood programs for residents of South Dakota and western Minnesota whose hearing loss precluded successful academic achievement in public schools for many years. In addition, beginning in 1977, SDSD began serving mainstream students, their teachers, and parents through its outreach programs. SDSD was established in 1880 and was placed under the control of the state Board of Regents in 1943 by a constitutional amendment. Dr. Maureen Schloss is the current superintendent.

Campus

The campus is situated in the eastern part of Sioux Falls and includes three major buildings on 13.1 acres of land. Over the last five years, the school has received about two million dollars in renovation and repairs. The campus is easily noticed on East Tenth Street and accessible at 2001 East Eighth Street. Present projects include the renovation of the Myklebust Gym facility (in planning).

Related Staff Support

Instruction at SDSD follows state requirements and is specifically designed to counteract the linguistic, educational, and social handicapping conditions of hearing losses. An audiologist, two speech language pathologists, a bilingual language specialist, and a transition coordinator directly provide related services. Additional specialists are contracted as well, including psychologists and occupational and physical therapists. Guidance and mental health counseling are provided as needed. All instructional and related services are designed to support deaf and hard of hearing students working toward state regular education or special education standards that have been developed by the state of South Dakota, Department of Education.

The school provides free audiological examinations to children birth – 21 years and free academic assessments to deaf or hard of hearing children in South Dakota. Please contact the SDSD main office for any evaluative services (605) 367-5200.

Instructional Philosophies

The school has completed a period of restructuring to meet new federal and state guidelines and currently runs two educational platforms to provide parents with choices and to provide students with complete language learning opportunities. The first program uses the bilingual approach, which balances American Sign Language and written English. The second program is an auditory oral program. Auditory oral teachers have the training to embed auditory oral speech and language development training into the normal K – 8 classes. With this classroom work and the help of speech therapy, these cochlear implanted and hard of hearing students are able to acquire oral speech much more quickly than in a traditional mainstream setting.

The instructional staff in either program is developing a linguistic “bridging” program to assist students with broadening their use and understanding of language, and they continue to analyze a wealth of technical information about the linguistic growth of their students to assist the student’s language growth and development.

Activities

SDSD also offers opportunities for take in social and sport activities after school hours. If varsity sports cannot be offered due to a small number of participants, SDSD encourages involvement within the Sioux Falls community with the YMCA. Organized after school activities allow students to participate in bowling, arts and crafts, swimming, Tae-Kwon Do, school plays, a student council, and an academic bowl competition with other deaf schools in the upper mid-west.



Students at SDSD have access to a wide range of programs suited to their spiritual needs. Two churches in the area employ signing leaders and those leaders and the child’s parents are responsible for religion classes and transportation.

A State Resource

The School also serves as a state resource center by providing assessment, consultation, and personnel training for local schools that choose to educate deaf and hard of hearing children within their own local system. Outreach staff and related service staff are available to provide some of these services in local schools; however, in house evaluations are much more thorough. Directors of Special Education for local school districts should work with their local SDSA outreach staff to set up such opportunities with the SDSA Program Specialist who coordinates student evaluation.

The SDSA Outreach Staff are typically the front line contacts for South Dakota families who deal with deaf and hearing issues. These staff are highly trained and experienced professionals who primarily assist families with deaf and hard of hearing children between the ages of birth – 3 years. These students are primarily home-based and the SDSA staff member's primary goal is assisting the parents and families to establish early communication with the child. They also assist school districts and families with hard of hearing children or deaf children who remain in their local school districts for their education. Parent training via in-service and distance learning, a school Internet database, and specific supports are available to families as needed, and are primary foundations for the outreach program.

SDSA has recently established a distance learning potential with technology and is gearing to use visual communications to enhance meetings with parents and school district staff concerning SDSA students, and parent sign courses. This program will be enhanced by the presence of a large Internet SDSA Web page that will provide information and accessibility regarding deafness and deaf issues to parents and school district staff.

Summer School Programs

SDSA offers an extended school year (ESY) program every year to students who demonstrate skill regression. Enrollment in ESY is determined by the Individual Instructional Program (IEP) team. Local school district staff, teachers, parents, and SDSA staff are part of each SDSA IEP team. The program typically includes speech therapy and instruction in literacy, written language, and mathematics.

Security/Teacher Training/Consultants/Visitors

Anyone who works with the children on more than one occasion is expected to complete a state and federal background check, including a tuberculosis screening at SDSA expense. Tours of the campus and school can be arranged by contacting the main office at the school in advance (605)367-5200.